

ER 10-4014

May 24, 1958

The Honorable Roy R. Rubottom, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs
Department of State
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Dick:

This morning, at the request of Dr. Milton Eisenhower, Dick Helms, J. C. King, and I called on him and gave him a preliminary briefing with respect to certain security aspects of his trip, and showed him copies of the attached memoranda. These reports include information received from our various Central American stations in reply to our request for their own summary of the situation, [redacted]

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that we were making this inquiry.

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Naturally I assume that our people are being reasonably cautious about the situation in light of the developments in connection with the Vice President's trip, and I recognize that a good deal will depend upon the instructions that go out to the hard core of the Communist leadership in the respective countries, and that these instructions will be based upon the Communist analysis of the results pro and con of the demonstrations in South America. However, even taking account of these factors, it is apparent that if the trip is made, all possible precautions should be taken and measures carefully co-ordinated, beginning right now.

Sincerely yours,

Allen W. Dulles
Director

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SUBJECT: Proposed Central American Visit of Dr. Milton Eisenhower

Panama

1. Political groups in Panama have taken no public position on the Nixon incidents, probably because their attention has been centered on the critical internal political situation and violent student rioting, which forced President De La Guardia to declare a state of seige early this week. Most press comment on the Nixon incidents took the position that they were unfortunate but were evidence of latent Latin American grievances against the United States. The opinion generally prevalent in Panama is that the incidents were not a conspiracy by international Communism, but were directed and exploited by the local Communist Parties.

2. Powerful nationalistic politicians have been carrying on an increasing agitation against the De La Guardia government in an attempt to bring about his overthrow. The present student rioting, which has had some guidance from the Communist Party, is believed to be tied in with the agitation and efforts of these ultra-nationalistic politicians to overthrow the government. Therefore, while there has been no anti-United States sentiment evident in the present student strikes which seem to involve internal issues only, it is probable that the Communist and other anti-United States groups would organize demonstrations which may easily develop into violence during the scheduled visit of Dr. Milton Eisenhower.

3. Experience in the current situation, which has resulted in a considerable number of dead and wounded, indicates that the Panamanian security services would be unable to prevent or control incidents by determined groups without resorting to the use of tear gas and arms.

4. The following are themes anti-United States groups may use to organize anti-United States demonstrations:

- a. Panama's claims to sovereign rights in the Canal Zone and to a share in the Canal's gross income;
- b. United States delay in implementing fully the Remon-Eisenhower Treaty of 1955;
- c. Blaming United States economic policies for general deterioration of Panamanian economic situation.

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Costa Rica

1. Spokesmen for all political groups, except the Communist Party, have publicly deplored the Nixon incidents, saying they were Communist inspired and not a true picture of the deep Latin American friendship for the United States. There has been some criticism in the press of detrimental United States economic policies in Latin America and the United States support of dictatorships, implying they were the underlying causes of the Nixon incidents. The proposed visit of Dr. Milton Eisenhower is known publicly and political leaders are favorably inclined toward the visit. It is the general opinion, however, that in view of the precedent established by the Nixon incidents, and particularly if there is an unfriendly reception of Dr. Eisenhower in the countries he visits before Costa Rica, there will be anti-United States demonstrations in Costa Rica. However, the Costa Rican schools are now organizing a parade in honor of Dr. Eisenhower's visit.

2. There are approximately 20 Communists and front group leaders capable of staging well organized anti-United States demonstrations. There are also student segments and unorganized hoodlum groups capable of agitation. The main Communist capability is in labor, women's, and youth front groups. The only other known groups capable of demonstrations are Cuban and Nicaraguan exiles in Costa Rica, who may protest alleged United States support of the Batista and Somoza governments.

3. It is believed that the newly elected government of President Mario Echandi is strongly determined to prevent serious anti-United States incidents. However, in view of the present unstable situation in the Costa Rican security services as a result of the recent change in government, it is believed that it would be impossible for the government to control mob demonstrations without resorting to extreme violence.

4. The following are themes anti-United States groups may use to organize anti-United States demonstrations:

- a. United States favoritism toward dictatorships;
- b. Deficient United States economic assistance program, i.e., the lack of stabilized coffee prices, and insufficient United States loans for agricultural and industrial development.

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Nicaragua

1. All political groups, except the Communists, lament the anti-Nixon incidents as unfortunate but at the same time feel that certain points of United States policy in Latin America were the underlying causes of the incidents. The political opposition parties cite United States support of dictators. Agriculturists condemn United States cotton "dumping" and United States refusal to join in hemispheric coffee price fixing. President Luis Somoza and other Nicaraguan officials are favorably inclined toward the proposed visit of Dr. Milton Eisenhower.

2. Except for the university at Leon, which would be the greatest danger spot in Nicaragua, there would probably not be serious anti-United States incidents during Dr. Eisenhower's visit.

3. The determination and ability of the Nicaraguan Government to prevent serious incidents, and to put down any demonstrations with force, are believed to be strong.

4. The detention of agitators during Dr. Eisenhower's visit would undoubtedly result in embarrassing publicity for the Somoza Government and the United States, and in view of this and the minimum risk of violence it is believed that any detentions would be inadvisable.

5. The following are themes that would probably be used by anti-United States groups to organize demonstrations:

- a. United States support of dictators;
- b. United States economic policies in Latin America;
- c. United States exploitation of natural resources in Latin America.

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Guatemala

1. Leaders of non-Communist political groups were generally shocked at the Nixon incidents. President Ydigoras and members of his cabinet are extremely worried over the scheduled visit of Dr. Milton Eisenhower in view of (a) the growing Communist threat and the recent return of many Communist exiles; (b) the mood of defiance toward public order as evidenced by the recent student strikes; and the effect, or the power of suggestion, of the Nixon incidents. Since his election in January 1958, Ydigoras has become increasingly unpopular in almost all political circles as a result of his almost complete lack of leadership and his failure to counter the increasing Communist threat. There have already been reports of plots to overthrow him and rumors that he is "mentally incompetent." Leaders of the leftist Partido Revolucionario have predicted that if Dr. Eisenhower visits Guatemala in the near future, he will be given an unfavorable reception with Communist-inspired demonstrations. Ydigoras has pointed out that June would be an especially bad month because it is the traditional month for student riots and has suggested that it would be preferable for Dr. Eisenhower to visit the other Central American countries first and not arrive in Guatemala before July.

2. A leader of the Partido Revolucionario predicted that the demonstrating group would initially be Communist-inspired and small, perhaps 100 people, but that the demonstrations would be infectious and might spread into larger and more serious disorders. The number of dangerous agitators who should be detained during Dr. Eisenhower's visit is quite high, and the Guatemalan Government does not have the ability to effect such detentions, and even if it did, the resultant publicity would be extremely embarrassing to the already unpopular Ydigoras government.

3. There can be no doubt of the capability of the Communist Party and student groups to create serious anti-United States incidents during the visit of Dr. Eisenhower.

4. It is believed that the Guatemalan Government does not have the ability to prevent serious anti-United States incidents, and would probably not have the ability nor determination to put them down by resorting to extreme violence.

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Guatemala

5. Grievances used in such demonstrations would probably be alleged United States imperialism and intervention in Guatemalan affairs; and the alleged United States sponsorship of the overthrow of the Arbenz Government in 1954.

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El Salvador

1. Reactions of Salvadoran political groups to the Nixon incidents have been mixed. Most groups condemn the brutal and uncouth treatment of Nixon and believe the incidents were Communist inspired and unfortunate. Some believe the anti-United States feeling stems from the drastic post-war drop in heavy United States purchases of strategic materials during World War II. People in various political parties, including some government officials, are critical of Nixon for having gone to Caracas and of the United States government for having permitted him to enter Venezuela in view of the well-known unstable political climate there. Salvadoran opposition non-Communist political parties are considered weak and not likely to engage in anti-United States incidents, although it is possible they may do so for the purpose of embarrassing the incumbent government.

2. The Salvadoran Communist Party, through manipulation of student groups, is capable of creating incidents of violence during Dr. Eisenhower's visit. However, they may be discouraged from doing so by the Salvadoran Government threatening that any use of violence will be met with force.

3. The Salvadoran Government, under the leadership of President Lemus, is relatively stable and believed to be capable of preventing violence without resorting to violence. It is also believed to be determined to resort to force if necessary and capable of doing so effectively.

4. The following are themes anti-United States elements may use to organize demonstrations:

- a. Sympathy of Salvadoran students with those in Caracas and Lima;
- b. Charge that United States deals only with governments and the wealthy, and is not raising the living standards of the poor;
- c. Blaming United States for low coffee prices which result in reduced income for El Salvador; etc.

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Honduras

1. Among the minority of Hondurans who gave the Nixon incidents more than momentary notice, there has apparently been no crystallization of opinion by political groups, except for the Communists. Most Hondurans feel the incidents were deplorable, but cite Nixon's own press comments as explanation of why and how it happened.
2. The Communist Party in Honduras is fairly strong, and its activities are centered principally on the north coast in the large fruit companies there, and among the student groups in Tegucigalpa. June 11 is Students' Day in Tegucigalpa, a traditional occasion for the expression of anti-United States feelings. Also labor negotiations with the United Fruit Company begin in June. Therefore, there is a strong indication of general popular unrest during late June. The Communist Party of Honduras is believed to be thoroughly capable of organizing anti-United States demonstrations, and especially in this climate of unrest. The detention of agitators who would probably be active during Dr. Eisenhower's visit is believed to be inadvisable; it would probably cause, rather than prevent, such incidents.
3. In addition to the danger of Communist agitation, political opposition parties in Honduras now control the military and security forces and there is a chance that irresponsible politicians may attempt to embarrass each other by creating incidents.
4. The ability of the Honduran security forces to prevent large-scale demonstrations or to put them down promptly if they do occur, is doubtful. Their ability to do so if Dr. Eisenhower goes to the north coast is extremely doubtful.

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